

MEDWAY ARCHIVES CENTRE

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mission Statement

Medway Archives Centre exists to help everyone discover the stories of Medway's people and places.

We collect and care for unique written, printed, spoken, and photographic material that records, describes, and illustrates how people and communities live and work in Medway, now and in the past. We also help Medway Council fulfil its obligation to preserve its own historical records and the historical records of its predecessor councils.

Our mission is to ensure that evidence from Medway's past and present is kept safe and shared, as we believe this can: encourage a sense of local belonging; build community cohesion and civic pride; bring enjoyment and enhance wellbeing; inspire research at all levels of education; and help efforts of regeneration.

We share the collections with you at Medway Archives Centre, through exhibitions and events, and online through our websites and catalogues. With our existing collections we help you to discover evidence about Medway's past, and by forming new connections with our local community we can ensure evidence from Medway's past and present is being collected.

1.2 About this Policy

'Collections Management', for the purpose of this Policy, is defined as the:

*'strategies, policies, processes and procedures relating to a collection's development, information, access and care'*¹

This Collections Management Policy is an overarching policy document combining the approach to [collections development](#) (including acquisitions), [collections information](#), [collections care](#), and [access](#) to collections at Medway Archives Centre in separate sub-policies. It is a framework for managing all aspects concerning the collections in our care. It has been developed in this way to ensure a co-ordinated approach across all these aspects which are required to run an effective and efficient archives and local studies service.

This Collection Management Policy and sub-policies will be supported by other policies (Access to Records Policy, Digital Preservation Policy), forward plans and procedures. See [1.7 Collections Management Framework](#).

1.3 History of the archive service in Medway

Medway Archives Centre is funded and managed as part of Medway Library and Archives Service², which is within the Regeneration, Culture, and Environment Directorate of Medway Council.

¹ Definition of Collections Management provided in 'PAS 197: Code of Practice for Collections Management', provided at <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Collections-Trust-Collections-Management-Performance-Indicators-Feb-2015.pdf>

² Although at times, over the last 13 years, MAC/MALSC has also been part of the Heritage and Tourism department, alongside the Museum service.

An archives service has existed in Medway since 1987. The **Medway Area Archives Office** was established in 1987, initially as an internal service to Rochester-upon-Medway City Council³ before launching as a public service in April 1990. The Medway Area Archives Office acted as a satellite office from the main Kent Archives Service run by Kent County Council; the staff reported to both the Kent County archivist and the Rochester-upon-Medway City Council museum curator.

Archival collections of Medway origin were transferred from Kent Archives Service between August 1989 and 1993. These included parish records, the Rochester Cathedral records, records of charities, statutory companies, Public Records and family and estate papers; this enabled the new Medway Area Archives Office to offer a full local government archive service. From 1990, many further collections were received directly from local depositors, including council departments.

In 1993 the Local Studies collections and staff of Kent County Council's local library service in Medway were co-located with archives at the Civic Centre, Strood, and the service was renamed the **Rochester-upon-Medway Studies Centre**.

On 1 April 1998 the Medway Council unitary authority was created, incorporating Rochester-upon-Medway City Council and Gillingham Borough Council, independent of Kent County Council. With effect from April 1998 Medway Council became an Archives Authority in accordance with the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and Local Government Act 1972.

At this point the Medway archive service was separated from the Kent County Archives Service, to exist independently to serve the Medway unitary authority area (Medway Council). It was established as the **Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre (MALSC)**, comprising both archive and Local Studies collections. MALSC inherited those collections that were already held, having been deposited with the Rochester-upon-Medway Studies Centre. Further collections specific to Medway were transferred from the Kent County Archives Service in Maidstone.

MALSC moved from the Civic Centre, Strood, to the current site at 32 Bryant Road, Strood, in July 2017, and changed its name to **Medway Archives Centre**.

1.4 Legal and Statutory Status

Medway Archives Centre has been approved as a place of deposit for:

- designated public records under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958
- manorial documents under the Manorial Document Rules 1959 (amended 1963 and 1967)
- tithe documents under the Tithe Rules 1960 (amended 1963)
- parish records in the Archdeaconry of Rochester under the Parochial Records and Registers Measure, 1978 (amended 1992).

Medway Archives Centre seeks to abide by all relevant archival legislation in relation to its collecting, and to assist Medway Council in complying with relevant legislation, including:

³ Rochester-upon-Medway City Council was under the control of Kent County Council

Local Government Acts

Medway Council is required to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents which belong to or are in the custody of the council or any of their officers' under section 224 of the Local Government Act 1972⁴. 'Proper arrangements' was defined in 1999 by the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) as including 'the preservation of the records, including storage and conservation; and the provision of access, including preparing finding aids and the means for enabling members of the public to consult the records (subject to any restrictions) under supervision'⁵. Medway Archives Centre acts as custodian for historic records created by Medway Council and predecessor local authorities.

Section 1(1) of the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 confers local authorities powers to enable 'adequate use to be made of records under its control', including allowing people to inspect the records and make copies, hold exhibitions, publish indexes or guides and summaries of the records'.

Under Section 2 of the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 Medway Archives Centre can also collect, by purchase, gift or deposit, records of local interest⁶.

Public Records Act, 1958 and 1967

The Public Records Act makes provision for the Public Record Office (now part of The National Archives) and sets up arrangements for the selection and transfer of public records to The National Archives or a place of deposit. Medway Archives Centre has been appointed a place of deposit for public records relating to Medway. A Place of Deposit is required to make available for inspection records in its care that are under 20 years old⁷ (as amended by the Freedom of Information Act).

Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

The Local Studies service is provided under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Under this Act Medway Council has a duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.... of securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures...⁸.

Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) provides public access to information held by public sector bodies, including Local Government. It applies to information, whatever its age. Information is assumed to be open from the time it is created unless one of the exemptions set out in the FOIA or exceptions in the EIR apply.

⁴ Local Government Act section 224: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/224>

⁵ Guidance on 'proper arrangements' for archives

⁶ Local Government (Records) Act 1962: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/10-11/56>

⁷ Originally 50 years under the 1958 Act, amended to 30 years by the 1967 amendment.

⁸ Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>, section 7

UK Data Protection legislation

UK Data Protection legislation controls how personal information about living individuals is used by organisations, businesses, and public sector bodies, and gives rights to those the information is about ('data subjects').

The GDPR and the DPA 2018 recognise the importance of processing personal information for the purposes of archiving in the public interest and historical purposes and contain provisions for this to be achieved, as long as such processing does not cause substantial damage or substantial distress to the data subject⁹.

1.5 Standards

We recognise our responsibility to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard, which replaces the National Archives Standard for Record Repositories, 2004. This standard defines good practice in all aspects of collection management and access.

We also aim to meet the following standards relating to the management of archive collections:

- BS 4971:2017 (Conservation and care of archive and library collections)
- BS EN 168903:2018 (Conservation of Cultural Heritage¹⁰)
- International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)].
- AACR2 cataloguing standards are applied to book stock

1.6 Roles and responsibilities

1.6.1 Strategic development of the Service

The Library Services Manager manages the strategic development of Medway Library and Archives Service, in line with key local and national priorities. This post line manages the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist.

Medway Library and Archives Service is part of Medway Council's Culture and Libraries, which reports to the Assistant Director Culture and Community division.

1.6.2 Operational management of Medway Archives Centre, forward planning, and development of the Archive collections

This is the responsibility of the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist (1.0 FTE). This post leads on Medway Archives Centre policies and forward planning with the Library Services Manager; line manages the other senior staff at the Centre; works to ensure that the collections are cared for and accessed in-line with national standards; leads on the development and management of the archive collections, including acquisition, cataloguing and access. This post has a post-graduate qualification in Archives and Records Management as an essential requirement.

⁹ Section 19 of the Data Protection Act 2018: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/section/19>

¹⁰ Full title is BS EN 168903:2018 (Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections).

1.6.3 Development of the Local Studies Collections

The Medway Archives Centre Librarian post (0.6 FTE) leads on the development (including acquisition, cataloguing, conservation, and disposal) and promotion of the Local Studies service; on outreach and education, including work with schools and community organisations; and planning the exhibition and events programme. This post has a post-graduate qualification in library and information science as an essential requirement.

1.6.5 Day-to-day operational management of Medway Archives Centre

The Senior Archives Assistant (1.0 FTE) supports the provision of an efficient and effective archives and local studies service by managing day-to-day operations; providing collection development assistance to the Archivist and Medway Archives Centre Librarian as required; answering specific types of enquiries; line manages Archives and Local Studies Assistants, and volunteer management.

1.6.6 Searchroom supervision, enquiry work, and document production

Archives Assistants (2.48 FTE) and Saturday Assistant (0.1 FTE) undertake the bulk of the supervision of the searchroom and Archives viewing room; enquiry work; retrieval and reshelfing of collections; contribute to exhibitions and events; straightforward collection care work (such as cleaning or repackaging collections).

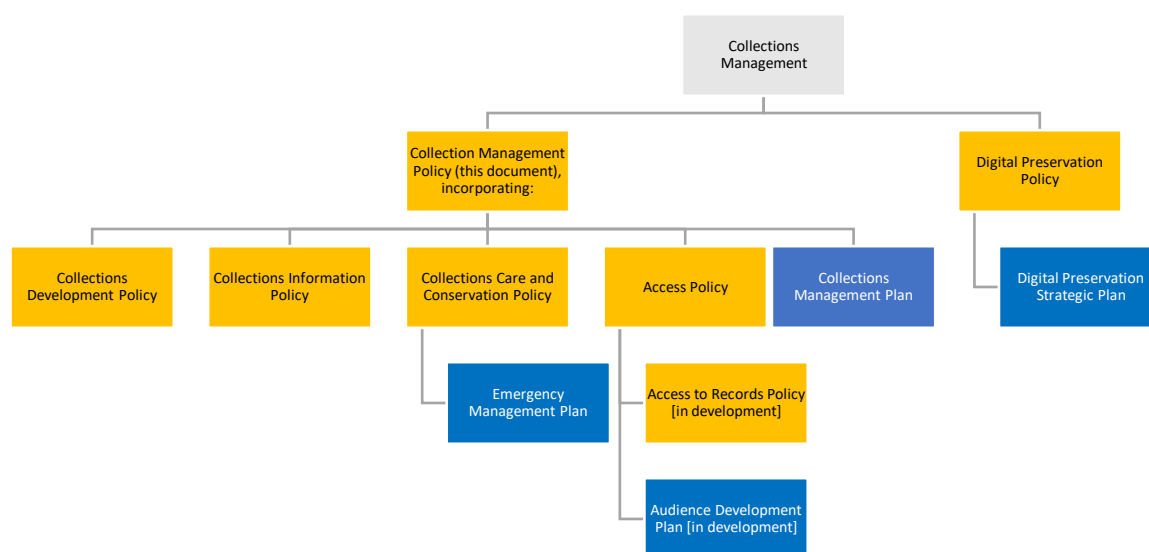
1.6.7 Conservation and preservation

Professional conservation and preservation copying work (creating surrogates) is outsourced as required. Medway Archives Centre uses the services of the National Conservation Service for professional advice on meeting the required standards for storage and collections care of archive collections.

1.6.8 Facilities Management

Facilities Management of the 32 Bryant Road site, in which the Medway Archives Centre is situated (along with Strood Community Hall and the Library Services Bibliographic Services Unit) is the responsibility of Medway Norse, a joint venture partnership between Medway Council and Norse Commercial Services (part of Norse Group). There is a full-time onsite Facilities Assistant at 32 Bryant Road.

1.7 Collections Management framework



Policy document

Plan

1.8 Communication and circulation

All staff, including freelancers/contractors, will be given this Policy as part of their induction. This Policy will also be published on the Medway Archives Centre webpages.

1.9 Review and revision

This Policy document was approved by the Library Management Team on 4 June 2021. It will be reviewed every three years, or as legislative or organisational change requires.

1.10 Contact details

To comment on this Policy, or for further information, please contact the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist at:

Medway Archives Centre, 32 Bryant Road, Strood, Kent, ME2 3EP

Email archives@medway.gov.uk

Telephone 01634 332714

Website www.medway.gov.uk/archives

2. COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

2.1 Introduction

'Collections development' within the context of our Collections Development Policy and Plan is defined according to the definition used in the National Archives Archive Service Accreditation guidance, which is:

*'Collecting new items, researching and reviewing the existing collections and removing items in accordance with the collecting organisation's policies and priorities.'*¹¹

Development of our collections is vital to ensuring we can meet our mission to:

- record how people and communities live and work in Medway, now and in the past, as well as helping Medway Council to preserve its own historical records and the historical records of its predecessor councils
- share the collections, by providing access for research, through exhibitions, and events, onsite and online.

This Collections Development Policy describes the approach that Medway Archives Centre (MAC) takes to collecting/acquiring new collections, including criteria for collecting. It acts as the Acquisitions Policy for Medway Archives Centre and sets out the criteria for selecting archival and published source material for long-term access and preservation at Medway Archives Centre. It also sets out our collecting exclusions. It applies to all records and published material, analogue and digital.

This Policy aims to:

- Improve the transparency of how we acquire collections
- Help with knowledge management and succession planning by ensuring there is written process providing a framework for acquisitions and collections development
- Ensure that we strive to meet at least minimum professional standards in collections development, and abide by all relevant archival legislation in relation to its collecting

The writing of this Policy will also help us to review current practices and how current Collections Development practices integrate with Collections Information, Collections Care, and Access. This Policy section should be read alongside the [Collections Information Policy](#), particularly with regards the development of existing collections we hold. Developing our existing collections (by cataloguing or improving the existing catalogues and promoting them in outreach work, or indeed by removing collection items that do not meet the criteria for collecting) could be argued to be as important as the acquisition of new collections.

Collections Development work is led by the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist (for archive collections) and the Medway Archives Centre Librarian (for the Local Studies collection), with support from the Senior Archives Assistant(s) and the Archives Assistants.

¹¹ The National Archives, Archive Service Accreditation Guidance for developing and completing an application, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-guidance-2019.pdf>

2.2 Standards

We continue to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard, which replaces the Standard for Record Repositories, 2004. This standard defines good practice, including in collections development, and defines how archive services should have a coordinated approach to collections development, including how it is integrated with the archive service's mission statement.

2.3 Scope of our collecting

We exist primarily to safeguard the historic records of Medway Council and its predecessor authorities. However, we collect more widely than this and we welcome contemporary and historic archival records and published material relating to the area covered by Medway Council as designated in 1998 (Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham, and Rainham, the surrounding villages, and the Hoo Peninsula) as well as parish records from the Archdeaconry of Rochester (the Archdeaconry extends into North West Kent as far as Dartford).

We aim to collect and preserve material that reflect all aspects of life for the individuals living and working in the area, and is representative of the wide range of organisations, businesses, societies, and institutions that exist or have existed in the area.

We are aware that there are areas of weaknesses in our collections, and that some communities and groups of the Medway area are not represented in the current collections¹². We are undertaking a Collections Inventory/Audit and from there will determine specific priorities for collecting (in addition to those which we have statutory obligations to collect).

2.3.1 Archive collections

We accept into the archive collections primary source material which adds to or complements existing collections. Records are selected for retention by the Archivist. Not all material offered to us can be accepted into the collections; offers of deposit will be assessed against the collecting criteria (detailed under '[criteria for collecting](#)') and against the scope of collecting which is defined as follows:

Local Government records

Medway Council is obliged to make proper arrangements for the care of administrative records created by the authority under section 224 of the Local Government Act 1972. Medway Archives Centre acts as custodian for historic records created by Medway Council and predecessor local authorities, as well as parish councils within the Medway Council area.

Private collections

Under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 we can collect, by purchase, gift or deposit, records of local interest¹³. We aim to take in a broad cross section of records

¹² For example, some current weaknesses include records of: artistic and creative organisations and individuals; LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities; minority ethnic communities; religious bodies and faiths, other than Anglican and mainstream non-conformist churches; sporting clubs and societies; local political parties and local branches of trades unions.

¹³ Local Government (Records) Act 1962, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/10-11/56>

created by local businesses, organisations, institutions, societies, political parties, community groups, nonconformist churches, and private individuals which contain significant information which can be used to study the history, geography and people of Medway. Contemporary and historic records are considered.

Public records

We are the place of deposit (under the Public Records Act 1958 (section 4)) for records created by central government but relating specifically to Medway, including Quarter Sessions, Health Authorities, Magistrates court records.

Church of England records

We are designated by the Bishop of Rochester as being the place of deposit for parish records generated by parishes in the Archdeaconry of Rochester¹⁴. We will hold and acquire parish registers and other parish records within the Archdeaconry of Rochester, in line with the Church of England's Record management guides¹⁵. We also hold the archives of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester Cathedral.

Tithe and Manorial records

We are designated a Place of Deposit for Tithe and Manorial Records under The Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and 1967 and The Tithe Rules 1960 and 1963 also by the National Archives, on behalf of the Master of the Rolls.

2.3.2 Local Studies collection

The main reference Local Studies collection for the area is housed at Medway Archives Centre. In addition, all Medway libraries have Local Studies stock, with both lending and reference titles available. The size of each Local Studies collection in the libraries depends upon location and use. Local Studies materials may be physical, digital or other media resources e.g. microfiche, videos etc

The local studies collection includes but is not limited to:

Books, newspapers, cuttings files, periodicals, posters, maps and plans, ephemera, images and photographs, microform, AV materials, and digital resources.

We select materials using the following criteria:

- resources on the Medway area, consisting of Chatham, Rochester, Gillingham, Strood, Rainham and the rural areas governed by the Medway Council
- significant industries, events and activities occurring in Medway
- works reflecting the cultural diversity of Medway
- works of literary value by local authors that give an insight into the Medway area and its people

¹⁴ Agreement dated 14 April 2008. The boundary for the Archdeaconry of Rochester differs from the Medway Council boundary, so Medway Archives Centre holds parish records for some parishes that lie within the county of Kent. A map of the Diocese of Rochester and archdeaconry boundaries is available at <https://www.rochester.anglican.org/mission/diocesan-mapping/>.

¹⁵ Church of England Record management guides at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/libraries-and-archives/records-management-guides>

- a small supplementary collection of publications relating to wider Kent that enhances and supports MAC collections¹⁶

In addition, we stock publications which provide context about, and assist in the study of, our locality.¹⁷

Published material is selected for retention by the Medway Archives Centre Librarian.

2.4 Criteria for collecting

In general, only one copy of any printed or pictorial item will be acquired.

Any collections which are offered should be assessed objectively by those with Collection Management responsibility according to the criteria in the MAC Collecting Matrix.

Decisions on acquiring new collections are assessed based on the scope of collections development (set out in [Scope of our collecting](#)) and against the criteria, which will include, but is not limited to:

- whether the material relates to the area covered by Medway Council (the Medway Towns, Hoo Peninsula, and surrounding villages)
- whether Medway Archives Centre is designated as a place of deposit for these records
- the relationship of the acquisition with existing holdings and areas of collection strength
- whether the material conflicts, competes or duplicates collections at other institutions
- whether the material is in a reasonable condition or requires active conservation work which is disproportionate to its historical value
- whether there are prohibitive access restrictions that may close the records for a period of time. Material can be closed in accordance with the appropriate legislation, but collections on which there is an indefinite closure period being imposed by the donor cannot be accepted
- whether we have the facilities at Medway Archives Centre to be able to provide access to the material
- whether it relates to the priorities and objectives of Medway Library & Archives annual service plan priorities.

2.5 Formats

We accept records into our archival collections in a variety of formats including, but not restricted to, manuscripts, maps, plans, volumes, photographs, digital records, sound recordings (albeit on a limited variety of carrier formats), letters.

We accept material in its original form. If the record is born-digital we will take it in its original format (and do not require a physical/paper surrogate)¹⁸.

¹⁶ The main collection for Kent wide Local Studies is held at *The Kent History and Library Centre*, James Whatman Way, Maidstone Kent ME14 1LQ (<https://www.kentarchives.org.uk/>)

¹⁷ Medway Libraries Stock Management Policy, 11.2, accessed via <https://service-desk.topdesk.net/tas/public/ssp/content/detail/knowledgeitem?unid=c11d0dbe4a18440e907d1dc12a5b8649>, 24/02/20

¹⁸ Subject to the accepted file formats list to be created as part of our Digital Preservation Strategic Plan

The wider local studies collection includes, but is not restricted to, printed material (including books, journals, newspapers, ephemera, maps), audio-visual (published) material, photographs, and microform.

2.6 Collecting exclusions

We do not select material which falls under the following criteria:

- material that is covered by the provision of the Kent County Council Archive Service Collecting Policy¹⁹ or the Screen Archive South East (based at the University of Brighton), except where large collections include material about Medway and other parts of Kent to a lesser degree (where we would usually seek to preserve the collection as a whole). We will always discuss such collections with the appropriate archive
- material that requires specialist storage, specialist curatorial skills and specialist equipment to facilitate viewing of the material in question. Wherever possible we will suggest alternative repositories for such collections. Film and video, for example, require specialist storage and equipment and we work in partnership with Screen Archive South East. We can arrange for film and video material to be transferred to their custody. Three dimensional artefacts, objects, specimens, and artwork are not accepted; these will normally be directed to an appropriate museum such as The Guildhall Museum, Rochester
- records and resources which are duplicates of material we already hold
- active or semi-current records
- private collections that are subject to blanket embargo periods and/or complex access arrangements
- collections where it is not possible to identify the owner of the collection being offered.

We reserve the right to refuse collections that require extensive conservation or conversion treatment prior to listing/cataloguing, or to seek financial assistance from the depositor/donor.

2.7 How we collect material

We currently acquire collections by:

- initial discussion with potential donor
- accepting (after appraisal) material offered to us
- making active approaches to possible depositors
- accepting internal transfers from Medway Council.

Material will not be accepted from individuals or institutions who have no legal right to donate or deposit them.

Material will only be accepted by prior arrangement. Decisions on acquisitions of collections are made by the Library Management Team.

¹⁹ Kent Archive Service Collecting Policy 2016, <https://www.kentarchives.org.uk/kent-archive-service-policies/>

We would normally require that large collections are sorted and listed electronically before they can be received, or alternatively we may seek financial assistance from the depositor to process and catalogue the collection.

2.7.1 Archive collections

Archive material is acquired through the following methods:

- deposit (statutory) – public records, including parish records. Ownership of the records is still held by the depositor individual or organisation
- donation (gift and bequest) – this means that the ownership of the archive transfers to Medway Council. This is the only available acquisition method for the archives of private individuals, and the preferred option for the deposit of other private collections.
- internal transfer – from Medway Council
- transfer from another archive or record office (such as Kent Archives).

Historically material has been acquired as a loan, including ‘permanent loans’ – this is when the ownership of the records is still held by an individual, organisation, or company. We are no longer able to accept loans from private individuals and we are no longer able to accept ‘permanent loans’ from any depositor as this can lead to the status of collections (and permitted uses) being unknown if a depositor is no longer traceable.

Loans of material from other private collections (charities, non-conformist denominations, societies, businesses, and other organisations) may be considered after discussion with the potential depositor. Acceptance would be dependent on the resources required to preserve and provide access to the material, and only with the approval of the Library Management Team. Should a loan be accepted, this will be for a minimum loan period of ten years, but must be reviewed every ten years, and depositors are asked to ensure that their contact details held by MAC are kept up to date.

Donors are encouraged to consider assigning copyright (where applicable) to Medway Council when material is donated/gifted; this is to facilitate long-term use of the collection by researchers.

Depositors and donors are required to ensure that contact details are kept up to date with Medway Archives Centre, to ensure that any query about the collection, either from MAC staff or the public, can be answered promptly.

At present, records are transferred from Medway Council departments when they have reached the end of their retention period and/or if they are known to have long-term value for historical, legal or cultural value. Records Management at Medway Council sits within the Information Governance team (within Legal Services), although individual departments are responsible for their own recordkeeping. Medway Council has adopted the retention schedule of the Local Government Association through LG Inform Plus²⁰.

On rare occasions Medway Archives Centre may be alerted to relevant archive material being sold through a private seller or auction. We do not have an acquisitions budget for archive collections, but we will work with our Friends organisation (Friends of Medway

²⁰ LG Inform Plus, Retention guidance, <https://retention.esd.org.uk/guidance>

Archives²¹) and funding organisations to acquire material that meets the criteria outlined in the [scope of our collecting](#) and [criteria for collecting](#). Any material that is bought with the assistance of external funding organisations will be held subject to the terms and conditions of the funding body.

2.7.2 Non archival collections relating to local studies

Material is acquired by purchase and by donation. Donations will be accepted according to the policy of Medway Libraries²².

2.8 Contact with depositors

We maintain contact with our depositors through the name and contact details provided at the time of deposit or donation. We ask that depositors advise us of any change of contact details, especially if the material is on deposit/loan and there are access conditions to the material they have deposited.

2.9 Appraisal

Appraisal is the process of selecting, for permanent preservation, records of continuing archival value either for administrative, legal or business value, or for their historical value. The aim of appraisal carried out at MAC is to determine and select those records which have archival value, and to avoid duplication.

Appraisal is carried out by those with collection management responsibility, with assistance from the Senior Archives Assistant, as required.

Records may be appraised at the point of acquisition, during accessioning, or when they are being arranged and listed or catalogued. Depositors are asked to check through records prior to deposit to remove duplication and to identify any material which might include personal data or require closure.

The appraisal process at MAC will use relevant guidelines, including guidance published by the National Archives, Local Government Association's LG Inform Plus retention guidance, the Church of England's Record Management guidance.

2.10 Reappraisal and deaccessioning

2.10.1 Archive collections

We reserve the right to apply the [scope of collecting](#), [criteria for collecting](#), and the [Collecting Matrix](#) to existing collections and resources, in reappraisal or retrospective appraisal exercises, predominantly in relation to privately deposited collections.

A collection or a resource may be deemed no longer appropriate for Medway Archives Centre to keep for the following reasons:

- the material does not meet the [scope of collecting](#) and [criteria for collecting](#)

²¹ Friends of Medway Archives website, <http://foma-lsc.org/>

²² Medway Libraries Stock Management Policy

- the material may be more appropriately held by another institution
- the material is on loan and the depositor has requested that it be returned.

Deaccessioning will be handled sensitively and in accordance with The National Archives' 'Deaccessioning and Disposal Guidance for archive services'²³. Material identified for deaccessioning will be returned, offered to another repository, or destroyed, and any decisions and actions taken will be documented. Archive material will not be sold.

Owners of collections on deposit or loan that wish to withdraw their collections temporarily or permanently must put their request in writing to the Archivist/Medway Archives Centre Manager in advance, stating their intention to withdraw some or all their records and name a representative authorised to act on their behalf. In the event the withdrawal is of a temporary nature, the owner or their representative must supply a date for the return of the records. We advise owners of appropriate security, handling, display, and storage arrangements they need to make whilst they have custody of the material.

In the case of permanent withdrawal of loaned records, a fee may be charged for conservation materials and professional services (such as cataloguing or storage).

2.10.2 Non archival collections and resources relating to local studies

As per Medway Libraries Stock Management Policy Local Studies stock no longer required in the branch libraries is sent to MAC for consideration of inclusion into the MAC collections and is assessed against the scope of collecting, criteria for collecting, and the Collecting Matrix.

Resources which no longer meet the criteria may be re-appraised by Collection Managers and, where appropriate, be withdrawn from the collection. MAC reserves the right to dispose of any unwanted stock for the benefit of the service.

Valuable/rare items will be offered to specialist dealers and second-hand book buyers and if appropriate, to other repositories and collections (see 2.11). Resources of general interest and likely to be of low value will be first offered to the branch libraries for inclusion into their collections, offered to other collections (for example, Kent County Council for Kent materials), or disposed of via the arrangement in place for Medway Libraries unwanted stock as stated in the Medway Libraries Stock Management Policy²⁴.

Full records will be kept of all disposals.

2.11 Cooperation with other institutions

We work closely with other repositories, particularly the Kent Archives Service (at the Kent History and Library Centre) and with Medway Council's Heritage and Tourism team (who care for the collections at the Guildhall Museum).

If we are offered material which relates to the collecting interests of other libraries, archives, or museums we will discuss the offer of material with the depositor and other repositories to

²³The National Archives, 'Deaccessioning and Disposal Guidance for archive services', <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/Deaccessioning-and-disposal-guide.pdf>

²⁴ Medway Libraries Stock Management Policy, 9.7 and Appendix B (<https://service-desk.topdesk.net/tas/public/ssp/content/detail/knowledgeitem?unid=c11d0dbe4a18440e907d1dc12a5b8649>)

ensure material is placed with the most appropriate institution. This also applies to resources no longer required at MAC (see 2.10.2).

[2.12 Connected documents](#)

Medway Libraries Stock Management Policy

Medway Archives Centre Collections Management Plan

3. COLLECTIONS INFORMATION POLICY

3.1 Introduction

'Collections information' within the context of our Collections Information Policy and Plan is defined according to the definition used in the National Archives Archive Service Accreditation guidance, which is:

'Information an organisation collects, creates, holds and maintains about its collections and/or collected items'.²⁵

We recognise the importance of good Collections Information. It underpins all aspects of our mission statement. Robust collections information is vital to ensuring the security of the collections and their physical care. It is vital to ensure that collections are discoverable and accessible, which will help us to keep existing audiences and engage new audiences. It is also vital in helping us to prioritise the use of resources.

This Collection Information Policy describes the information that Medway Archives Centre (MAC) collects and creates about the collections in its care. It applies to all records and published material, analogue and digital. The purpose of this Collections Information Policy within the wider Collections Management policy is to:

- Improve the transparency of how MAC accessions, catalogues, preserves and provides access to collections
- Help with knowledge management and succession planning by ensuring that accurate and complete information is recorded about collections from the acceptance of a collection and onwards, in consistent ways
- Ensure that MAC strives to meet at least minimum professional standards in documentation procedures and collections information

The writing of this Policy will also help us to review current practices and how current Collections Information practices integrate with Collections Development, Collections Care, and Access.

Collections Information work is led by the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist (for archive collections) and the Local Studies Librarian (for the Local Studies collection), with support from the Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant(s) and the Archive and Local Studies Assistants.

This Policy covers information created:

- at the point of deposit and during accessioning
- during cataloguing
- through location and movement control
- through removal or deaccessioning

This Policy is supported by a Collections Management Plan, which outlines the objectives through which we will achieve the aims of this Policy.

²⁵ The National Archives, Archive Service Accreditation Guidance for developing and completing an application, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-guidance-2019.pdf>

3.2 Relevant standards

We recognise our responsibility to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard. This standard defines good practice, including in collections information, and defines how archive services should have a coordinated approach to collections information, including how it is integrated with the archive services' mission statement, and approach to collections development and access to collections.

MAC (and predecessor archive services) have used the mandatory elements of the Internal Council on Archives International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)] (although the 'name of creator' is not always included) ISAAR(CPF), and RDA.

MARC 21 and the Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC) have been used for cataloguing Local Studies books and journals.

3.3 Impact of legislation

The legal and statutory status of Medway Archives Centre is set out at [in section 1.4 \(Legal and Statutory Status\)](#). Good Collections Information is important to ensure we can meet our obligations under these Acts.

3.4 Systems for recording information

Collections information is maintained in a variety of places and formats, including:

- correspondence and emails
- deposit agreements and temporary receipts
- accessions Registers (bound volumes, Excel Accession Register, Adlib)
- collections Management software (Adlib, for archive collections, Spydus for Local Studies collections)
- electronic finding aids and databases, such as Excel spreadsheets
- manual finding aids and catalogues
- document request slips

3.5 Information created at the point of deposit and during accessioning

3.5.1 Archive collections

Point of deposit

Material is often offered to Medway Archives Centre for an initial assessment about whether it should be archived at MAC, as outlined in [criteria for collecting and appraisal](#). In these instances, the owner of the material is issued with a Temporary Deposit form.

A Donation/Deposit Agreement²⁶ (or transfer form, for internal Council records) must be completed for each new accession. The Donation/Deposit Agreement is filled out after discussions with MAC staff; this agreement allows the depositor/donor to determine the terms of deposit, any closure periods, whether copyright is assigned to Medway Council,

²⁶ Previously known as Accessions Receipt

whether material can be deaccessioned in the future. Depositors are issued with a copy of this agreement once signed by both parties.

A new paper folder/envelope ('depositor folder') is created for each new depositor, which then contains all the depositor records including copies of any Temporary Receipts, Deposit Agreements, and email or postal correspondence. Data about depositors is retained permanently; it is not made available to the public and is stored securely.

Material which is accessioned into the collections, either as donation, loan (private), statutory deposit, or transfer, is recorded on an accessions database²⁷.

Accessions databases

Accessions information for archives has been recorded in Accessions Registers (bound paper volumes) since 1989. At first a system (since known as 'pre DE') was used which was a running number, followed by a letter depending on the type of record/collection it was²⁸. This system was changed in 1990, and from 1990 to late 2008 each new accession was given a unique accession number (starting with 1) prefixed with 'DE' ('deposit'); this was a sequential system (the next accession would be given the next number). In late 2008 the 'DE' was discontinued from use for accessions records. New accessions are given a number following from the previous accession, sometimes prefixed with 'Acc' for clarity on what this number is.

Historically, a more substantial description of the accession than the Register would allow was then also added to a MS Word document; sometimes these were quite extensive descriptions. Accession entries were also historically made available to the public (minus any depositor details) via the 'CityArk' online catalogue. These accession records on CityArk were not transferred to Adlib and so they exist only in physical accession volumes and MS Word documents.

Current practice (since September 2019) is to add the accession to the current (bound) Accessions Register, into an Excel spreadsheet version of the accession register, and also enter new accessions into the Accessions catalogue of the collections management system used by Medway Archives Centre (Adlib). The accessions records (in the Register, Excel spreadsheet and on Adlib) will include a basic description of the records within the accession, the provenance, dates of creation (as a date span), and size. Depositors are asked to list any material prior to accessioning, in either MS Word or Excel formats. Public record bodies presenting public records to MAC are directed to read the National Archives guidance 'Transferring to Places of Deposit'²⁹ before they are ready to deposit records.

Accessions records are not made available to the public via the Adlib catalogue, although we annually report substantial new accessions to the National Archives as part of the annual Accessions to Repositories survey (minus any personal depositor details), and within the Friends of Medway Archives quarterly journal³⁰.

²⁷ Current practice is to record new accessions in an accession register (a paper volume), on an overarching excel spreadsheet (which is enabling us a full overview of all accessions into Medway Archives over time), and on our collections management system in the accessions database. Historic accessions have been recorded in a variety of ways, mainly in accessions registers and in MS Word documents on the local shared drives.

²⁸ A was local authority, B was business records, E was estate records, S was for society records.

²⁹ The National Archives, 'Transferring to places of deposit' guidance, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/manage-information/transferring-to-places-of-deposit/>

³⁰ Friends of Medway Archives, The Clock Tower, <http://foma-lsc.org/journal.html>

New archive collections will be catalogued to at least fond/collection level at the earliest opportunity.

Historically some collections are without a deposit agreement, or a collection was deposited on 'permanent loan'. As per the Collections Development Policy ([section 2.7.1](#)), private collections deposited as loans must have a review date (of at least ten years) so that MAC and the depositor can review the loan and revisit the terms of the deposit.

Contact may be made with the depositors with collections on 'permanent loan' on a case-by-case basis, as resources allow, to see if they would consider gifting the collections.

3.5.2 Local Studies collections

Historically many donations were accepted without documentation, so provenance is almost impossible to trace or prove.

Current practice is that material is often offered to us for an initial assessment about whether it should be accepted for the Local Studies Collection at MAC. In these instances, the owner of the material is issued with a Temporary Deposit form.

If the material of offer is accepted by the Local Studies Librarian, the donor is asked to fill out a Donation form. Other documentation about donations (such as email/postal correspondence) is also filed alongside the donation form. If donations are catalogued (on Spydus) item numbers are included.

Data about donations is retained permanently; it is not made available to the public and is stored securely.

Local Studies donations will be listed at the earliest opportunity and catalogued via Spydus library system where appropriate.

3.6 Collection Management Systems used

3.6.1 Archive collections

Historical context

In 1999 the Medway Archives & Local Studies Centre established 'CityArk', an online, purpose built finding aid software. It was the first record office catalogue to provide online access to digital images of parish records, through a project called 'Medway Ancestors' that started in 2002 and was completed in 2005 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

CityArk was replaced in 2017 due to vulnerabilities in the software and a lack of technical support to maintain and develop it, and around the same time that Medway Archives & Local Studies Centre physically moved and rebranded to become Medway Archives Centre, the online catalogue also moved to the Adlib software (hosted by Axiell). The Guildhall Museum in Rochester, part of Medway Council and a partner institution of MAC, was already using Adlib and the installation of 'Adlib Museum' that it was using was upgraded to 'Adlib Museum + Archives', becoming a shared catalogue for Guildhall Museum and MAC, benefiting both users and staff. Medway Council also purchased the Axiell Internet Server (hosted by Axiell) to act as the online catalogue user front-end. There was a fixed-term project archivist post to work on the migration of catalogue data from CityArk to Adlib from autumn 2016 into 2017.

Current practice

We use the accessions database and cataloguing database in Adlib Archives.

Accruals to existing collections are given a new unique accession number and then, when catalogued, added to the existing fond/collection through the catalogue references they are given through hierarchical arrangement in Adlib.

Prior to 1999 collections information was recorded on paper catalogues, held in the archive searchroom. These paper catalogues are still available for users onsite in the current Archives viewing room. Some catalogues are still only available in hard copy (paper) format.

We will use the following standards:

- The mandatory elements of the Internal Council on Archives International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)]
- International Standard Archival Authority for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families [ISAAR(CPF)]
- The National Council on Archives, Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names [NCA Rules]

3.6.2 Local Studies collections

Books and pamphlets are catalogued on Spydus, a Civica system, used by Medway Libraries who are part of the SELMS consortium, a partnership of library services in the south east of England which joined together to deliver better services for its customers.

In addition to the Spydus catalogue entry, new material is added to the list of accessions which includes Spydus Class numbers and individual item numbers.

For Local Studies materials which are not catalogued using Spydus the following finding aids are maintained:

- maps: handlist of holdings, digital and paper copies
- newspapers: handlist of holdings, digital and paper copies
- image Collections: an in-house index to photographs, images and prints is maintained. Online images have additional metadata files.
- periodicals and journals: handlists of holdings
- microfilm: catalogue of resources

3.7 Restrictions and closure periods

Records held at Medway Archives Centre may be subject to certain access restrictions and/or closure periods. These may be determined by Data Protection legislation, guidance from The National Archives and the Information Commissioner's Office, or imposed by the depositor. These will be detailed in a separate Access to Records Policy.

3.8 Location and movement control (archives)

We maintain up-to-date locations information on collection material including:

- a list of the physical location of collections in the archive strongroom (in MS Word documents) – at collection/fond level. These lists are saved to the team shared drive and a copy printed off for storing in the archive strongroom.
- any movement of material away from its location in the archive strongroom is recorded on retrieval/movement triplicate slips. A copy is retained on the shelf, and two copies with the records (one of which can be retained by the user at the end of

their appointment). These slips are filled out by staff members or by researchers if they are requesting material on the day of their visit or for a future visit. Slips are retained for four years.

- material removed from the strongroom for researcher access is also recorded on an Excel bookings spreadsheet. This provides an additional element of location control but also statistics on which collections are being consulted.
- if material is loaned to external borrowers for exhibitions, conservation, or reprographics a note is added to the catalogue record for that record. External borrowers must fill out a loan agreement.
- donors wishing to remove material (permanently or temporarily) must complete a Withdrawal form. See [section 2.9.1](#) for more information on this process.
- if any records cannot be found in the strongroom they are added to a missing record log; this is updated when the record is found.

3.9 Collections care information

Information about the physical condition or characteristics of archive items is included in the accessions or catalogue records where this might limit or affect the use of or access to the records. For example, if a document is very fragile and cannot be accessed without causing further damage this will be marked on the catalogue ('unfit for production'), or if the record is on a carrier that requires mediation.

3.10 Disposals and withdrawals

Permission to destroy securely any material not worthy of permanent preservation is captured at the point of deposit and reconfirmed prior to disposal.

We reserve the right to review the material in our custody and to recommend transfer or disposal in accordance with its Collections Development Policy (['Reappraisal and deaccessioning' section](#)).

Disposals and withdrawals are recorded in the accessions register (Excel register, bound volume, and Adlib, if an accessions record exists here).

3.11 Catalogue prioritisation

We believe that cataloguing to at least fond/collection level is essential in ensuring researchers are aware of the collections held at Medway Archives Centre, and whether they are available for consultation.

There is a backlog of uncatalogued archive collections. Historically this is due to a shortage of qualified posts (there has only ever been one Borough Archivist / Council Archivist post, and occasional project Archivist posts), but in more recent years this is also due to the physical move of the Centre in 2017 (and the work required to manage that move), the post of Manager and Archivist being vacant for 17 months (May 2018 - September 2019), and the upheaval of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

The extent of the backlog is being assessed through the current Collections Management Plan (through a Collections Inventory/Audit). From there a prioritisation scheme will be established to help the archive service plan how and where to focus current resources and explore external funding opportunities.

The Collections Inventory/Audit will also identify those collections which have paper catalogues. An assessment will then be made as to whether there are staffing resources to

import the catalogues into Adlib or whether an electronic version of the paper catalogue can be made available (akin to the National Register of Archives digitisation project), provided this can be done in an accessible way.

3.12 Staffing and resources for cataloguing

The intellectual arrangement of archive collections will be performed by a qualified archivist. Some elements of cataloguing work will be undertaken by Senior Assistant and Assistant posts and volunteers, under the supervision of the Archivist.

A procedural manual for MAC's use of Adlib (covering accession and catalogue records) has been created, which guides staff in their collection information work for archive collections and ensures that information is being recorded completely and consistently.

Cataloguing of Local Studies material is performed by the Local Studies Librarian. Some elements of cataloguing work may be undertaken by Archives and Local Studies Assistants, under the supervision of the Local Studies Librarian.

3.13 Protecting Collections Information

Collections information (such as depositor paperwork, bound accessions volumes) is held securely in our strongroom or lockable filing cabinets in the staff office.

Digital collections information (such as an Excel accessions database, collections inventory, and collection listings) is held on a Medway Council file server. The file servers are fully backed up monthly, through daily incremental capture. Backups of file servers are retained for one month.

Catalogues and accessions information held on Adlib is hosted as part of Axiell's hosted service. They take daily verified backups of the system. In addition, three generations of backups are created and stored in a different location, allowing them to restore from any given month in the previous six months, any week in the previous month or any day within the previous fortnight³¹.

3.14 Connected documents

Collections Management plan

Access to Records Policy [in development]

³¹ Axiell Service Level Agreement UK Hosting & Support Services, v3, March 2020.

4. COLLECTIONS CARE AND CONSERVATION POLICY

4.1 Introduction

'Collections Care' within the context of our Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan is defined according to the definition used in the National Archives Archive Service Accreditation guidance, which is:

[The] Range of activities intended to safeguard a collection. These activities can include organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning³²

We recognise the importance of good Collections Cares and conservation practice. It is vital to ensuring the security of the collections and their physical care and long-term preservation and accessibility, and underpins all aspects of our mission statement, that we:

- collect and care for unique written, printed, spoken, and photographic material that records, describes, and illustrates how people and communities live and work in Medway, now and in the past
- help Medway Council fulfil its obligation to preserve its own historical records and the historical records of its predecessor councils
- ensure that evidence from Medway's past and present is kept safe and shared.

This Collections Care and Conservation Policy describes the steps that we will take to safeguard the collections in our care. It is predominantly focused on the physical (analogue) archive and fragile Local Studies collections that are part of Medway Archives Centre collections³³. The purpose of this Collections Care and Conservation Policy within the wider Collections Management policy is to:

- demonstrate our commitment to the collections in our care
- acknowledge that the assessment of risk to the collections is the single most important process to ensure the long-term preservation of all collection formats
- demonstrate the actions we need to take to manage the risks to the collections in our care (through storage, packaging, handling, conservation, surrogate creation, loaning material, security, emergency planning) to ensure long-term preservation and access.

The writing of this Policy will also help us to review current practices and how current collections care and conservation practices integrate with Collections Development, Collections Information, and Access.

³² The National Archives, Archive Service Accreditation Guidance for developing and completing an application, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-guidance-2019.pdf>

³³ See separate Medway Archives Centre Digital Preservation Policy for policy statement on digital records

Collections care and (preventive) conservation work is led by the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist (for archive collections) and the Local Studies Librarian (for the Local Studies collection), with support from the Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant(s) and the Archive and Local Studies Assistants.

This Policy is supported by a Collections Care and Conservation Plan, which outlines the objectives through which we will achieve the aims of this Policy.

4.2 Standards and principles

We recognise our responsibility to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard. This standard defines good practice, including in collections care, and defines how archive services undertake a range of activities to safeguard collections.

We aim to comply with BS 4971:2017 (Conservation and care of archive and library collections) and BS EN 168903:2018 (Conservation of Cultural Heritage³⁴).

We aspire to the 'good' level of practice as set out in Benchmarks 3.0 Conservation Planning for Archives, Libraries and Museums³⁵.

These standards and practices will enable us to present:

- a consensus for managing collections
- a range of benchmarks against which to measure performance
- a means by which to assess and evaluate
- a process to enable the identification of funding, either internally or from external sources.

4.3 Definitions

In this policy the following definitions apply:

- Preventive conservation ('collections care', or 'preservation'): A range of activities intended to safeguard a collection and avoid and minimise future deterioration, damage and/or loss. These activities can include organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning³⁶
- Remedial conservation: actions applied to an object to prevent or arrest damaging processes³⁷
- Emergency Plan: A written plan which identifies an organisation's vulnerabilities to emergency situations, indicates how to prevent or mitigate against the potential effects of an emergency and describes staff response.

³⁴ BS EN 168903:2018 (Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections)

³⁵ Benchmarks 3.0 Conservation Planning for Archives, Libraries and Museums, available via the NCS website, <http://www.ncs.org.uk/benchmarks3.php>

³⁶ Combination of the definition of collections care from the National Archives Archive Service Accreditation guidance and preventive conservation as used in BS 4971 (Conservation and care of archive and library collections), section 3.2

³⁷ As defined in BS 4971, section 3.2

- Surrogate: A copy of an original, possibly in a different form to the original, such as microfilm or digital image, in order to protect the original from use or overuse³⁸.

4.4 Storage of archives

We aim to care for our physical collections in accordance with BS 4971:2017 (Conservation and care of archive and library collections) and BS EN 168903:2018 (Conservation of Cultural Heritage).

We have been a member of the National Conservation Scheme (NCS) since spring 2020; we are working with them to ensure our strongroom meets these standards.

Environmental conditions are being monitored through four environmental monitors located throughout the strongroom.

The archive strongroom is kept clean and tidy and cleaned as part of a regular cleaning programme.

We undertake pest monitoring and will take any necessary steps to deal with pests.

We inspect new collection material we acquire for pests and mould, and to determine repackaging requirements.

We aim to develop a survey of the collection to ensure we have an understanding of all formats held, and their specific storage and preservation requirements.

4.5 Repackaging collections in suitable enclosures

Archive and some Local Studies collections (such as photographs) are repackaged into archival quality boxes, paper/card, or archival standard polyester sleeves/pockets as appropriate to their size/format. Other supplies required (ties, support boards) are archival standard.

There is a specific budget line that can be used for the purchase of archival standard packaging materials.

4.6 Handling

Staff and volunteers working with original archive collections are trained in good handling techniques, including during retrieval and reshelfing. Users are given handling guidelines and offered help and advice during their appointment. Staff, volunteers, and users have access to book supports and weights, and polyester coverings if required, and given advice for their use.

Users visiting Medway Archives Centre can purchase a digital image permit to enable them to take photographs of collection items, provided there are no restrictions on copying from

³⁸ Definitions of 'Emergency Plan' and 'Surrogate' as used in Benchmarks in Collection Care 2.0 authored by the Museums Libraries Archives Council, 2011. Shared under a CC-BY-NC-SA 3.0 licence, https://collectionstrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Benchmarks_Glossary_2011.pdf

the collection owners, and as long as they sign a copyright declaration form declaring the use of the images is for private research use only.

Copying of collection material using a photocopier or flat-bed scanner can only undertaken by Archive staff or volunteers, with appropriate training, after an assessment of the material.

Collection material which is fragile, and handling would damage it, is marked on the catalogue as 'unfit for production'. On these occasions access to a surrogate is provided if resources allow³⁹.

Access to original items is generally not provided to users if a surrogate copy exists (in digital or microfilm form).

4.7 Remedial conservation and conservation projects

Preventive conservation and collections care work are our primary consideration for the preservation of the collections in our care. Preventive conservation and collections care work is carried out by our staff and volunteers (with training).

When collection items in our care require intervention to remedy a perceived problem (normally items in this condition are marked as 'unfit for production' on our collection management system), a decision to take action will be made if the condition of the collection item prevents its content, value or significance from being accessed, or if the condition of the collection item in its current state would result in its content, value or significance being lost without intervention.

Such remedial conservation will be outsourced to an appropriately qualified conservator when resources allow in accordance with the standard for the Procurement of conservation services and works⁴⁰

Conservation requirements and risks are recorded by staff on the collection management system. There is a specific budget line that can be used for conservation work and preservation.

4.8 Creation of surrogates

There are five main reasons when we would create surrogate copies of collection material (such as on microfilm or through digitisation/digital photography):

- in response to customer requests for copies, subject to access restrictions and in return for appropriate fees⁴¹
- to provide access to at-risk material (that which is fragile and marked as 'unfit for production', or which is held on obsolete formats, where the format is unstable and/or the equipment to playback the format is obsolete) or to that which is regularly requested (such as newspapers within the Local Studies collections)
- for use in promotional material, exhibitions, or education and outreach work
- for planned in-house digitisation projects

³⁹ See [section 3.9](#) of the Collections Information Policy and [section 5.13](#) of the Access Policy

⁴⁰ BS EN 17429:2020 Conservation of cultural heritage - Procurement of conservation services and works

⁴¹ Fees are reviewed annually and published on the [Medway Archives Centre webpages](#).

- if working with commercial partners on larger-scale projects.

The creation of surrogates will only be carried out if the material will not be damaged by digitisation or photography. The original record will be retained after a surrogate is created, even if the original format, or equipment to playback the format, is obsolete.

4.9 Collection security

Archive collections and Local Studies special collections are stored in a secure strongroom. Access is restricted to Medway Archives Centre staff and the onsite Facilities Assistant (when required). Senior staff members are keyholders. The strongroom is key lockable, has an additional door code entrance requirement, and also a security shutter for overnight / out of hours use. Contractors are supervised by staff when working in the strongroom.

The 32 Bryant Road site (including the archive viewing room and Local Studies searchroom and storage areas) are covered by CCTV cameras which are additionally monitored by Kyndi (previously MCG [Medway Commercial Group]) outside of staffed hours.

All staff, visitors (including volunteers) and contractors are required to sign in and out of the building. We provide lockers for visitors to secure personal belongings, and to ensure that bags and coats are not brought into the searchroom or Archive Viewing Room.

Archive collection material can only be accessed by making an advance appointment. All researchers need to register, agree to the viewing room regulations, and by provide proof of identity and address at their first appointment. The Archive Viewing Room is always invigilated by staff when researchers are accessing archive material.

4.10 Emergency preparedness and planning

We have a number of strategies to reduce the risk of unavoidable emergencies, including annual health and safety checks, smoke detection throughout the building, including a VESDA system in the strongroom, test evacuations, and routine servicing and checks on all mechanical and electrical systems.

We have a comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, which outlines the preventative measures in place to reduce the risks of an emergency occurring, and actions to be taken in the event of an emergency. The Emergency Plan is reviewed annually, and all members of staff have access to it. We are a member of Harwell Restoration Priority User service, which in the event of a disaster will provide recovery and emergency salvage services.

4.11 Storing digital records

We have only recently (since late 2020) had a programme to care for our digital records. Previously digital records were kept on the original media/carrier they were deposited on, and sometimes backed up (although this was irregular).

As a first step Medway Archives will undertake actions to meet NDSA level 1⁴².

⁴² See Medway Archives Centre Digital Preservation Policy and Strategic Plan 2021-2024.

4.12 Exhibitions, and lending material

Medway Archives Centre aims to provide as wide an access as possible to its collections, to promote its collections more generally to wide audiences, and to promote enjoyment of and research around its collections. At Medway Archives Centre we use surrogate copies of collection material for our own onsite exhibitions and encourage the use of surrogate copies for external displays and by external institutions and organisations.

However, we do still welcome applications from other institutions and organisations to borrow original items from our collections for exhibition, provided we are in a position to loan the material (which will be dependent on ownership of the material, and the arrangements set out in the donation or deposit terms of the collection), and dependent on the item(s) being requested (and their fragility and condition).

To ensure that collection items are cared for we can only lend if the borrowing institution or organisation can demonstrate that it can meet the conditions, security, insurance, handling, and other collections care requirements of BS 4971: 2017, as set out in our Terms and Conditions for Loaning Material.

4.13 Connected documents

Medway Archives Centre Collections Care plan

Medway Archives Centre Digital Preservation Policy v1.0

Medway Archives Centre Emergency Management Plan

5. ACCESS POLICY

5.1 Introduction

'Access' within the context of our Access Policy and Plan is defined according to the definition used in the National Archives Archive Service Accreditation guidance, which is:

*(the) Right, opportunity or means of finding, using or approaching items and/or information about items...that includes on-site and off-site access, support for the core business of the governing body, digital access and outreach and learning activities.*⁴³

Access to collections is core to our mission statement, that we:

- ensure that evidence from Medway's past and present is kept safe and shared, as we believe this can: encourage a sense of local belonging; build community cohesion and civic pride; bring enjoyment and enhance wellbeing; inspire research at all levels of education; and help efforts of regeneration
- share the collections with you at Medway Archives Centre, through exhibitions and events, and online through our websites and catalogues.

This purpose of the Access Policy within the wider Collections Management policy is to:

- identify the legislative framework which determines how Medway Archives Centre provides access to collections
- describe ways that Medway Archives Centre provides access to the collections it cares for
- describe our commitment to promoting a culture of customer care, and provide an efficient and response service
- describe why some classes of records cannot be accessed or have closure periods.

The writing of this Policy will also help us to review current practices and how current access to collections integrates with Collections Development, Collections Information, and Collections Care.

Access to collections at Medway Archives Centre is a key part of all job roles at Medway Archives Centre. The strategic overview for access is led by the Medway Archives Centre Manager and Archivist. The Manager and Archivist, Local Studies Librarian and Senior Archive and Local Studies Assistant(s) plan access activities and methods of access. The core function of the Archive and Local Studies Assistants job role is related to the provision of access to collections by helping the public to use the collections held at Medway Archives Centre and to deal with written and telephone enquiries.

5.2 Legal and Statutory Status

Medway Archives Centre seeks to abide by all relevant legislation in relation to providing access to its collections including:

- The Public Records Act, 1958 (amended 1967) – a Place of Deposit is required to make available for inspection records in its care

⁴³ The National Archives, Archive Service Accreditation Guidance for developing and completing an application, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-guidance-2019.pdf>, pg. 69

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- UK Data Protection legislation (General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and Data Protection Act 2018)
- Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, and The Copyright and Rights in Performances (Research, Education, Libraries and Archives) Regulations 2014.

5.3 Standards

We recognise our responsibility to meet the requirements of The National Archives' Archive Service Accreditation standard.

We are working to ensure our online catalogues and resources comply with W3C/WAI's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1, Conformance Level AA.

We work to the [Medway Council Customer Pledge](#), which includes providing a courteous and helpful service, listening to and learning from customer feedback, deal with enquiries promptly and keep customers informed of progress, respect customers' privacy, and support customers to access our services onsite and online.

5.4 Community of users

We aim to provide as wide an access to Medway Archives Centre collections as possible, to inspire people to visit, to engage with the collections online, and to encourage new and creative uses of the collections. The users of Medway Archives Centre include, but is not limited to:

- The local community (individuals and groups), for family and local history research onsite
- Local, national, and international communities and people that use our online resources for family and local history research
- Local schools
- Staff and students of Universities at Medway
- Medway Council staff and Councillors
- Volunteers
- Publishers and the media

Medway Archives Centre communicates with users, and gets feedback on services from users, through:

- Direct enquiries to Medway Archives Centre (via email, phone or post)
- The Friends of Medway Archives
- Medway Archives Centre user surveys
- Medway Council's Customer Contact service⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Medway Council website 'Comment on a Council Service', https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200138/your_council/470/complaints_compliments_or_comments/12

5.5 Forms of access

Users can access the collections and archive services onsite by:

- visiting during open hours, accessing original collection material or surrogate material
- visiting to look at exhibitions in the foyer (which include surrogate collection items)
- accessing digitised content accessible through commercial partners using one of the public access computers
- attending talks and events
- volunteering for Medway Archives Centre

And remotely:

- through a remote research and reprographics service (a fee service)
- using digitised collection items, through the online archive catalogue, Medway Images, and through commercial partner websites
- through the Medway Archives Centre webpages to gain information about the collections and services
- through our social media presence (Facebook and Instagram, which offers opportunities for engagement)
- through online exhibitions on the webpages.

5.6 Onsite access and facilities

We have a public searchroom where we provide access to the majority of the Local Studies collection material and archive material that is available in surrogate form (microfilm/fiche or digitised). The searchroom has a map table, four self-service microfilm/fiche readers, and four public computers (providing access to e-Resources including commercial history sites). The searchroom is continuously staffed during opening hours.

We have a Viewing Room for consulting archive collection material (and some original Local Studies material). Access to archive collections is by advance appointment, to ensure staff have time to locate and retrieve material from the archive strongroom. Some material may be able to be ordered on the day, depending on staffing levels. Users are given handling guidelines (verbally and written) and new users looking at archive material are required to register for a readers' card (valid for 4 years) and provide proof of identity and address.

All visitors (including volunteers and contractors) are required to sign in and out of the building. We provide lockers for visitors to secure personal belongings, and to ensure that bags and coats are not brought into the searchroom or Archive Viewing Room.

Visitors are permitted to use laptop computers and other equipment and can purchase a digital image permit to enable them to take photographs of collection items or download digital images from the digital UScan machine.

5.7 Disabled access and facilities

Medway Archives Centre is committed to supporting users with disabilities, to ensure inclusive access to the collections and facilities. As part of this we provide:

- step-free access. There is a ramp from the car park to the Centre, and all public areas for the site (such as the foyer, customer toilets, Searchroom and Viewing room) are all on the one level

- an accessible disabled toilet
- designated disabled parking bays in the car park
- a hearing loop. This is normally at the main welcome desk (in the Searchroom) but is portable and can be moved as required
- a multiple height desk in the Searchroom and magnifying glasses available for customers if required
- staff members trained in deaf awareness and dementia.

5.8 Online access

Our webpages, part of Medway Council's website, are available via www.medway.gov.uk/archives. These provide an overview of our collections, information about our services onsite and those available remotely, fees, links to our online catalogues, and a number of online exhibitions.

The online exhibitions are a new feature, developed during the 2020 lockdown, as a way to ensure that physical exhibitions worked on by staff could be accessed in some form whilst we were closed to the public. They provide access to digital images of material held in the Local Studies and Archives collections.

Our online catalogue for Archive collections ([Medway Council Heritage Services online catalogue](#)) is an Axiell Adlib catalogue that is shared with the Guildhall Museum, Rochester. It is sometimes referred to as CityArk (the name of the previous online archive catalogue). It provides free online access to parish registers in the Archdeaconry of Rochester, as well as digital images from other collections.

Local Studies books, pamphlets and journals are catalogued on the [Medway Library service catalogue](#).

We also have a separate image website called [Medway Images](#) which provides free online access to images from the Local Studies collections. This website is in-review and we are looking at future options for hosting the content which provide a better user experience and meets WCAG 2.1 AA standard.

As well as the online exhibitions we also share digitised content via a [Medway Archives Centre Facebook page](#) and [Instagram account](#).

We have worked with two commercial partners to provide online access to some of our collections. Ancestry provides access to Poor Law Union records for Hoo, Medway and Strood, and to Methodist birth, marriage and burial records for the Medway Area. Findmypast provide access to a selection of school admission registers and logbooks from 1870 to 1914; this was part of the National School Admission Registers & Logbooks project that many archives around the UK took part in. These are paid-for services but can be accessed for free onsite at Medway Archives Centre and Ancestry can be accessed for free at Medway Archives Centre and at all Medway Libraries.

A selection of photographs from a glass plate negative collection are available for free via the [Kent Photo Archive website](#).

5.9 Enquiries and research

We receive enquiries via email, post, telephone, and in-person. The Medway Archives Centre inbox (archives@medway.gov.uk) is manned during regular working week hours.

Staff aim to respond to enquiries within five working days, although more complex enquiries which require staff research (and paid research and reprographics orders) may take longer. Users will be kept informed regularly of progress in answering their enquiry if there is a delay.

Enquiries relating to the content of collections (but which do not involve the use of records) and how to access material onsite or online, are answered for free. There is a charge for enquiries concerning the content, or information, within collections, with fee structure based on 15-minute, 30-minute and one-hour enquiries. For research enquiries estimated to take longer than one hour we can provide users with a list of external independent researchers who they may wish to contact to come and undertake research on their behalf.

Fees are reviewed annually and published on the [Medway Archives Centre webpages](#).

5.10 Copies of collection items

Users visiting Medway Archives Centre can purchase a digital image permit to enable them to take photographs of collection items or download digital images from the digital UScan machine. Users are required to complete a copyright declaration form declaring they understand material may be in copyright and that digital images cannot be reproduced without permission of the copyright holder.

We offer a reprographics service for set fees and can supply copies of material on paper or as digital files.

Fees are reviewed annually and published on the [Medway Archives Centre webpages](#).

5.11 Exhibitions and outreach

We offer a busy programme of talks and exhibitions to raise awareness among existing and potential users. Events and exhibitions are planned by the Local Studies Librarian; all staff members take part in the planning and delivery of exhibitions and events.

Exhibitions, talks, and events are promoted through social media, leaflets and posters (distributed at other Medway Council sites), the Friends of Medway Archives, and other local history/community societies.

Exhibitions (of surrogate material) can be loaned to colleagues in other Medway Council buildings or external organisations for a set period.

5.12 Promotion

We aim to promote our collections in a variety of ways including:

- in person (through staff)
- via email and telephone (occasionally in writing)
- social media
- our online catalogues
- Medway Images website
- press releases and publicity about events, projects and other activities
- at outside events and venues (in the past this has included shopping centres, at community events, and at Medway Council headquarters).

5.13 Restrictions on access

We seek to abide by both the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulation 2004, and the UK Data Protection legislation when providing access to collections.

Reasons for not allowing access to records are where:

- they are subject to statutory closure
- there is a statutory exemption
- there would be a breach of depositor or owner's confidentiality
- we would be in breach of the UK Data Protection legislation
- the record is unfit for production
- the collection is uncatalogued
- the record is available in surrogate form

Our Access to Records Policy will provide more detailed information about possible restrictions on access to Archive collections.

5.14 Connected documents

Audience development plan [in development]

Access to Records policy [in development]

Medway Council Data Protection Policy (current version v1.0, November 2018)

Document Control

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1.1	Minor punctuation and style' updates in line with the Medway Council Digital standards (content standards)	11/06/2021
1.2	Changes to Collections Development Policy, namely local studies collecting criteria	13/06/2022